



## Wandering and getting lost

A person with dementia is at risk for wandering and becoming lost; many do so repeatedly. In fact, more than 60 percent of those with dementia will wander. If not found within 24 hours, up to half of wandering individuals will suffer serious injury or death. It's important to be aware of the risk factors for wandering.

### Signs of wandering behavior

A person may be at risk for wandering if he or she:

- Comes back from a regular walk or drive later than usual.
- Tries to fulfill former obligations, such as going to work.
- Tries or wants to “go home,” even when at home.
- Is restless, paces or makes repetitive movements.
- Has a hard time locating familiar places like the bathroom, bedroom or dining room.
- Acts as if doing a hobby or chore, but nothing gets done (e.g., moves around pots and dirt without actually planting anything).
- Acts nervous or anxious in crowded areas, such as shopping malls or restaurants.

### Tips to reduce wandering

If you live with or care for a person with dementia, here are a few tips to help reduce the risk of wandering.

- Provide opportunities for the person to engage in structured, meaningful activities throughout the day.
- Make sure the person gets enough exercise, which can help reduce anxiety, agitation and restlessness.
- Place deadbolts either high or low on exterior doors.
- Ensure all basic needs are met (e.g., toileting, nutrition, thirst).
- Carry out daily activities, such as folding laundry or preparing dinner.
- Reassure the person if he or she feels lost, abandoned or disoriented.
- Control access to car keys (a person with dementia may not just wander by foot).
- Avoid busy places that are confusing and can cause disorientation, such as shopping malls.
- Do not leave someone with dementia unsupervised in new surroundings.

If family members or friends are likely to wander, consider pre-registering them in the Silver Alert Community Response Program, now available in Amesbury, Dedham, Dennis, Duxbury, Gloucester, Ludlow, Melrose, Norwood, Pittsfield, Taunton, Westwood, Yarmouth.